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ACTION AF-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 ACQ-00 CIAE-00 USNW-00 DODE-00 DS-00
EUR-00 E-00 VC-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00 LAB-01
VCE-00 NSAE-00 OIC-02 IRM-00 DSCC-00 DRL-02 NFAT-00
SAS-00 /005W

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1318
INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000786

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/12

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE: MDC URGES USG TO LET SOUTH AFRICA AND NIGERIA
PUSH FOR NEW ELECTION

REF: A) HARARE 748 B) HARARE 721

CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF MATT HARRINGTON. REASONS:
1.5 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

1. (C) SUMMARY: MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION MDC LEADERSHIP ARE
MORE COMFORTABLE WITH PRESIDENT OBASANJO'S EFFORTS TO FACILITATE
DIALOGUE WITH ZANU-PF THAN WITH PRESIDENT MBEKI'S. THE PARTY'S
SECRETARY-GENERAL, WELSHMAN NCUBE, ADVISED THE USG AGAINST

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PRESSING PUBLICLY FOR A NEW ELECTION AT THIS STAGE, INSTEAD
ENCOURAGING US TO PUSH SOUTH AFRICA AND NIGERIA TO TAKE THE
PUBLIC LEAD ON THIS ISSUE. NCUBE DESCRIBED THE PARTY'S
INTERACTIONS WITH THE CANADIAN COMPANY AT THE CENTER OF THE
ALLEGED ASSASSINATION PLOT AGAINST PRESIDENT MUGABE. DANGER
SIGNS OF A SETUP WERE EVIDENT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE COMPANY'S
APPROACH TO THE MDC, AND THE PARTY'S FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THOSE
AT THE TIME REVEALS A SURPRISING POLITICAL NAIVETE. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) THE AMBASSADOR, ACCOMPANIED BY POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF,
MET AT HIS RESIDENCE ON MARCH 22 WITH MDC SECRETARY-GENERAL
WELSHMAN NCUBE. NCUBE WAS JOINED BY THE MDC'S SHADOW FOREIGN
MINISTER AND MP TENDAI BITI.

TALKS WITH MBEKI, OBASANJO

3. (C) WE ASKED TENDAI BITI, WHO HAD PARTICIPATED IN MORGAN
TSVANGIRAI'S POST-ELECTION TALKS ON MARCH 18 WITH PRESIDENTS

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MBEKI AND OBASANJO (REF B), FOR HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THOSE
DISCUSSIONS. BITI APPROVINGLY DESCRIBED OBASANJO AS A CONSUMMATE
BRIDGE-BUILDER WHO DID AN IMPRESSIVE JOB OF BREAKING THE ICE IN A
MEETING WHICH WAS AWKWARD AT FIRST. HE THOUGHT MUCH LESS OF
PRESIDENT MBEKI, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS A "COLD, CALCULATING
POLITICIAN." BITI CONFIRMED THAT THE TWO PRESIDENTS DID NOT
PRESS FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY AS THE WAY FORWARD BUT
DID ENCOURAGE AN MDC-ZANU-PF DIALOGUE.

4. (C) NCUBE NOTED THAT THE FACILITATORS NAMED BY MBEKI AND
OBASANJO -- ANC SECRETARY-GENERAL KGALEMA MOTHANTHE AND NIGERIAN
ACADEMIC PROFESSOR ADBEYO ADEDEJI -- HAD ARRIVED IN ZIMBABWE AND
WERE CURRENTLY TOUCHING BASE WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF BOTH PARTIES.
THE MDC HAD SHARED ITS NEGOTIATING PRINCIPLES WITH THE
FACILITATORS AND WOULD WAIT TO SEE WHAT THE OTHER SIDE CAME UP
WITH. ASKED WHETHER THE FACILITATORS WERE FAIR BROKERS, NCUBE
SAID HE DID NOT KNOW THE NIGERIAN BUT HAD HEARD GOOD THINGS ABOUT
HIM. IT WAS TOO EARLY TO TELL, HE SAID, WHETHER THE ANC
SECRETARY-GENERAL WOULD PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE. HE WAS PLEASED

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THAT MOTHANTHE HAD STATED HIS OBJECTIVE AS PROMOTING SUFFICIENT RECONCILIATION TO HAVE A UNITY GOVERNMENT BEFORE AND AGAIN AFTER NEW ELECTIONS.

WAY FORWARD: NEW ELECTION?

15. (C) ASKED WHAT THE MDC'S CURRENT OBJECTIVES WERE, BITI SAID HE SUPPORTED FORMATION OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT, THEN DRAFTING OF A NEW CONSTITUTION WHICH WOULD GOVERN NEW ELECTIONS. BITI INSISTED THAT THE CONSTITUTION-DRAFTING PROCESS WOULD NOT TAKE LONG, AS SIGNIFICANT MATERIAL HAD BEEN GLEANED SINCE THE MOVE FOR
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CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM BEGAN IN 1999. NCUBE ADDED THAT KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP WOULD BE GATHERING AT A RETREAT NEAR BULAWAYO OVER THE WEEKEND TO STRATEGIZE ON NEXT STEPS. (COMMENT: HEAVY SURVEILLANCE BY POLICE AND CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION AGENTS OF THE PLANNED VENUE IN THE MATOBO HILLS TOURIST AREA FORCED PARTICIPANTS TO RECONVENE IN BULAWAYO. WE WILL BE SEEKING A READOUT OF THE LEADERSHIP'S DISCUSSIONS. END COMMENT.) THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR THE UNITED STATES TO PRESS PUBLICLY FOR A NEW ELECTION. NCUBE SAID SUCH AN APPROACH AT THIS EARLY STAGE WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, PLAYING INTO MUGABE'S EFFORTS TO DEMONIZE THE WEST. HE ADVISED US TO ENCOURAGE SOUTH AFRICA AND NIGERIA QUIETLY TO TAKE THE LEAD ON THIS ISSUE. ASKED WHETHER THE MDC HAD IN PLACE A PLAN IN CASE ITS LEADERSHIP WAS ARRESTED, NCUBE SAID THE SIMPLE ANSWER WAS "NO, WE HAVE NO PLAN B TO DEAL WITH SUCH A SCENARIO."

DICKENS AND MADSON SAGA

16. (C) NCUBE HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH TREASON ALONG WITH MDC LEADER

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
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MORGAN TSVANGIRAI AND THE PARTY'S SHADOW AGRICULTURE MINISTER, RENSON GASELA, IN THE ALLEGED ASSASSINATION PLOT AGAINST PRESIDENT MUGABE. NCUBE TOLD US THAT THE COMPANY AT THE CENTER OF THE ALLEGED PLOT, DICKENS AND MADSON, HAD HIRED RUPERT JOHNSON, A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF GASELA'S, TO MAKE THE INITIAL PITCH TO THE MDC. ACCORDING TO NCUBE, JOHNSON WAS AN UNWITTING PAWN IN THE WHOLE AFFAIR -- HE WAS RECRUITED TO WORK IN DICKENS AND MADSON SOME MONTHS EARLIER; IT TURNS OUT ONLY TO SET UP TSVANGIRAI AND HE HAS SINCE BEEN DISMISSED BY THE COMPANY.

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17. (C) ACCORDING TO NCUBE, DICKENS AND MADSON HAD APPROACHED THE MDC WITH AN OFFER TO REPRESENT THE PARTY IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA. THE COMPANY CLAIMED TO HAVE EXCELLENT CONNECTIONS AT THE VERY HIGHEST LEVELS OF THOSE GOVERNMENTS. DICKENS AND MADSON CLAIMED FURTHER TO HAVE RAISED MONEY FROM DISGRUNTLED ZIMBABWEANS LIVING ABROAD AND SAID IT WOULD SIMPLY DEDUCT ITS LOBBYING FEES OUT OF THESE FUNDS. THE MDC ONLY WOULD BE REQUIRED TO TRANSFER A SMALL SUM OF MONEY TO THE COMPANY, AS THEY WERE TOLD PROOF OF

SUCH A TRANSFER MUST BE PRESENTED WHEN A LOBBYING GROUP REGISTERS IN THE UNITED STATES TO REPRESENT A FOREIGN ORGANIZATION. IN A PROPHECIC STATEMENT, THE MDC'S TREASURER INITIALLY BALKED AT MAKING THIS PAYMENT, COMMENTING THAT HE HOPED THE PARTY WOULD NOT COME TO REGRET ITS ASSOCIATION WITH DICKENS AND MADSON.

18. (C) NCUBE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT, IN RETROSPECT, DANGER SIGNS WERE EVIDENT FROM THE MOMENT DICKENS AND MADSON CONTACTED THE PARTY. THE MDC IGNORED THEM, HOWEVER, AND REFRAINED FROM VERIFYING THE COMPANY'S BONA FIDES AND THOSE OF ITS DIRECTOR, ARI BEN-MENASHE, BECAUSE IT TRUSTED GASELA'S LONGSTANDING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH RUPERT JOHNSON. NCUBE ADMITTED THAT THAT HAD TURNED OUT TO BE A COLOSSAL MISTAKE. HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE,
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HOWEVER, THAT THE CHARGES WOULD NOT HOLD UP IN COURT AND RELISHED THE PROSPECT OF CROSS-EXAMINING BEN-MENASHE. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THE USG HAD A GREAT DEAL OF DEROGATORY INFORMATION ABOUT BEN-MENASHE, AND ENCOURAGED NCUBE IN FUTURE TO APPROACH US WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT COMPANIES OR INDIVIDUALS CLAIMING TO HAVE SENIOR CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

COMMENT

19. (C) TENDAI BITI'S PREFERENCE FOR A NEW ELECTION HELD ONLY AFTER NATIONAL ENDORSEMENT OF A NEW CONSTITUTION IS NOT PARTY POLICY. MORGAN TSVANGIRAI HAS CALLED FOR A NEW ELECTION HELD UNDER INTERNATIONAL SUPERVISION, BUT THE PARTY HAS NOT DETERMINED THAT A NEW CONSTITUTION SHOULD BE A PREREQUISITE FOR ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. WE SHARE FOR NOW NCUBE'S VIEW THAT A VISIBLE USG ROLE IN PUSHING FOR A NEW ELECTIONS COULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AT THIS STAGE AND THAT WE SHOULD, INSTEAD, ENCOURAGE THE SOUTH AFRICANS AND NIGERIANS TO TAKE THE LEAD ON THIS ISSUE. THE MDC DEMONSTRATED A SURPRISING POLITICAL NAIVETE IN ITS HANDLING OF THE DICKENS AND MADSON AFFAIR, WHICH HAS PROVIDED THE GOZ WITH A LEGAL EXCUSE -- NO MATTER HOW THIN -- TO GO AFTER THE PARTY LEADERSHIP.

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